

Commission for Women

Volume 44

Newsletter of the Montgomery County Commission for Women

March 2004

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Two Montgomery County Women Chosen for Induction Into Maryland Women's Hall of Fame; Inductees to be Honored at March 16 Event

Two Montgomery County women – an escaped slave-turned-abolitionist and a pioneer for women in the legal system – have been selected for induction into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame for 2004.

The names of Emily Edmonson and Vivian Simpson were submitted by the Montgomery County Commission for Women for consideration for induction into the Hall of Fame, located in Annapolis and supported by the Maryland Commission for Women. Both women are also included on the County Commission's Women's History On-Line Archives (www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw) created in 2002 to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the local commission.

"These are two women whose stories should not be lost," said Patricia Cornish, president of the Montgomery County Commission for Women. "Their lives contributed significantly to the history of this county and this state, and we are so proud to have been the catalyst for their induction into the Women's Hall of Fame."

Emily Catherine Edmonson



Born in Montgomery County in 1835, Emily Edmonson was one of 14 children born to Paul and Amelia Edmonson, a free black man and an enslaved woman. In April 1848, when the vessel *Pearl* docked in Washington, Emily and five of her siblings joined a group of slaves in an attempt to reach the vessel and escape to the north. (*continued on page 3*)

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President's Message



by Patricia E. Cornish

Women have become a dominant force in business, schools, the Internet and all aspects of society. The rapid growth and adoption of technology has created workplaces difficult to imagine twenty, ten or even five years ago. The professional and personal demands on working women have grown immensely. The Commission for Women continues to address these issues and seek solutions.

Recently I received a telephone call from a friend who wanted me to know that she'd been listening to me complain for years about equity in the workplace, or the lack thereof. Although she heard my complaints, she had never understood the impact. That is, until she started a new job recently and there it was! The dragon reared its ugly head. She admitted she was shocked to be on the receiving end of something which she questioned the existence of, and was fired up to take action.

Taking action works! SB 250 the Labor and Employment – Equal Pay Commission Act of 2004 was recently passed by the Maryland State Senate! The next step – to the House of Delegates for consideration. We owe a big thank you to Senator Sharon Grosfeld for introducing this legislation and to all of you for mobilizing the grass roots effort to make a difference in this decision. We must be ready for the next round of testimony and hearings. I'm counting on all of you to be there to support, mobilize and celebrate victory.

Many individuals are complacent because they feel equity has been achieved. The truth is – it has not. We have only begun to face the battles and challenges ahead. Establishing an Equal Pay Commission to examine equal pay in Maryland and to remedy the situation is definitely a step in the right direction.

The Commission for Women recently took action by completing the Brave New World Seminar Series. Four successful seminars were held focusing on a range of social, cultural and economic issues facing immigrant women and their families. These seminars provided critical information and opportunities to create solutions.

The upcoming Educators Symposium titled, "Getting Girls to Get I.T." will provide information to educators on the best practices for gender equity in the information technology classroom. It will also provide information about programs and resources available to women and girls preparing for an I.T. major and career.

This event is only the beginning of an effort to take action to create a climate for girls to enter fields in which they have been underrepresented – and to help foster a diverse and equitable workplace.

We are thankful for the opportunity to institute change, to educate, to inform, to advocate and to face the struggles of women and families in Montgomery County, in the state of Maryland and across the nation.

(continued from page 1)

With the slaves hidden among boxes, the *Pearl* started its voyage down the Potomac. However the captain of a passing vessel reported the *Pearl* as being “suspicious,” and when it was forced to dock in a creek to ride out a storm, it was seized by armed men and towed back to Washington. The slaves were jailed and Emily and her siblings were purchased by slave traders and taken to New Orleans. Due to an outbreak of yellow fever in New Orleans, Emily and her sister, Mary, were returned to Alexandria. Through the efforts of the girls’ father, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and her brother, the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, the girls were finally freed in November 1848.

With financial assistance from Rev. Beecher’s church in Brooklyn, Emily and Mary attended New York Central College and in 1853, through the assistance of Rev. Beecher and his sister, they attended prep school at Oberlin College in Ohio. After the untimely death of her sister, Mary, six months after arriving in Ohio, Emily returned to Washington and enrolled in the Normal School for Colored Girls near Dupont Circle.

In 1860, Emily married Larkin Johnson and returned to the Sandy Spring area where she resided for 12 years. At least one of her children was born in Montgomery County. She and her husband moved to Anacostia where they purchased land. She worked closely in the abolitionist movement with Anacostia neighbor Frederick Douglass. The two remained close friends after slavery was abolished in 1862. Emily Edmonson died at her home in September 1895.

Vivian V. Simpson



Born on March 16, 1903, Vivian Simpson grew up in Takoma Park, graduated from McKinley Technical High School and went to the University of Maryland, College Park to study teaching.

While at Maryland she was labeled a troublemaker after she complained about certain rules that applied only to female students – such as not being allowed to smoke on campus

and having to turn off their room lights by 9:30 p.m. Simpson caused further trouble for herself after she

(and another coed) refused to support a vote of confidence by students for administration officials who had been charged with improper activities with coeds. The next year, university officials refused to allow her to register, inviting her to transfer elsewhere. She sued the University for reinstatement, won her case at a lower court level, only to have it reversed by the Court of Appeals. She transferred to George Washington University where she earned her B.A., but changed her career ambition from teaching, and went on to graduate with honors from the Law School.

Simpson’s long profession was highlighted by a number of “firsts.” Among them were: first woman attorney on the Board of County Commissioners, first woman to be appointed to the State Industrial Accident Commission (forerunner of the Workers’ Compensation Commission) and the first woman elected president of the Montgomery County Bar Association. That same year – 1949 – she became the first woman to be appointed Secretary of State of Maryland. After serving one term, Simpson resigned, stating she wasn’t cut out for politics, but continued her career as one of Montgomery County’s most prominent attorneys. Simpson died in 1987, following a long illness.

Special Event to Honor Inductees

Emily Edmonson and Vivian Simpson will be recognized at “A Celebration of Montgomery County Women’s History” program hosted by the Montgomery County Business & Professional Women (MCBPW) and the Montgomery County Commission for Women (CFW) on March 16 (the 101st birthday of Vivian Simpson) at The Doubletree Hotel, (Regency Room), 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville.

The program will include oral presentations about Edmonson and Simpson and remarks from descendants and friends of the honorees. Representatives from the Maryland Commission for Women will provide information on the Women’s Hall of Fame and the initiative to establish a Maryland Women’s Heritage Museum. The Montgomery County Women’s History Quilt will also be on display. The Hall of Fame event will begin with networking at 6:30 p.m., dinner (\$33) at 7 p.m., and the program at 8 p.m. Deadline for reservations is March 11.

Checks, made payable to Montgomery County BPW, should be sent to: Denise Stoutamire, Montgomery College, Office of Equity and Diversity, 900 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD 20850. Also include address, phone number, names of persons attending, and total number in party. For more information, call the Montgomery County Commission for Women, 240-777-8330.

Summary of the Women's Legislative Briefing 2004



Dr. Dorothy Height signs copies of her book "Open Wide the Freedom Gates: A Memoir."

On Sunday, January 25, 2004, more than 400 people from throughout the state of Maryland attended the Women's Legislative Briefing at the 4-H Conference Center in Chevy Chase. Legislative initiatives regarding pay equity, sexual assault, and effective lobbying were among the many issues discussed at the briefing. This was the 24th year in which the Montgomery County Commission for Women, in collaboration

with a host of prominent women's and community organizations throughout the state, has sponsored the event. Over the past two decades, the briefing has served as a forum for legislators, community advocates, experts and interested citizens.

Dr. Dorothy Height, Chair and President Emerita of the National Council of Negro Women, Inc., delivered an awe-inspiring keynote address in which she discussed her lifelong role as an advocate for women and minorities. She also stressed to the audience the importance of advocacy in the community. After her remarks, Dr. Height stayed at the event to sign copies of her recently published nationally-acclaimed book, "Open Wide the Freedom Gates: A Memoir."

Commissioner Shelia Parker, Chair of the 2004 Women's Legislative Briefing was Mistress of Ceremonies during the opening ceremonies. The opening also included greetings from Montgomery County Executive Douglas Duncan, United States Congressman Chris Van Hollen, and Maryland State Senator Gloria Lawlah.

The opening ceremonies were followed by a series of workshops focused on Keeping Women Safe, Protecting Women's Health, Making "Work & Women" Work, Understanding the Legislative and Budget Process, and Protecting Our Sisters - International Women's Issues. In each workshop, a panel of experts including legislators and community leaders led the audience in an informed

discussion about policy affecting women. Most workshops were held twice to allow audience members the opportunity to attend more than one session.

The Keeping Women Safe Workshop addressed legislative initiatives regarding domestic violence, sexual assault and a ban on assault weapons. One measure would improve Maryland's criminal law to ensure that if a person says "no" to a sexual act and her lack of consent is ignored, it should be considered a crime in Maryland. Panelists included Senator Sharon Grosfeld, Senator Rob Garagiola, Delegate Neil Quinter, Leah Barrett, Executive Director of CeaseFire Maryland (formerly Marylanders Against Handgun Abuse), and Lisae Jordan, Director, Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault Legal Institute. Michael Cohen, Executive Director of the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence served as the moderator for this session.

Moderated by Dorothy Fait, Chair of the Maryland State Ethics Commission, the Protecting Women's Health Workshop included Delegate Joanne Benson, Wendy Royalty, Vice President of Public Affairs, Planned Parenthood of Maryland and Glen Schneider, Executive Director, Maryland Citizen's Health Initiative. The panel discussed upcoming health legislation of particular interest to women.

Panelists for the Making "Work & Women" Work workshop discussed issues regarding social security, welfare reform and pay equity. Participants in this workshop included Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez and Jodi Grant, Director of Work and Family Programs & Public Policy at the National Partnership for Women and Families. Initiatives discussed in this workshop included paid family leave and pay equity. Patricia Cornish, President of the Montgomery County Commission for Women moderated each session.

The Understanding the Legislative and Budget Workshop gave audience members insight on the most effective methods in making one's voice heard by our lawmakers. Panelists included Delegate Jean Cryor and Ann Ciekot, Binderman and Ciekot LLP. This workshop was offered only once and was moderated by Lenita Walker of the Prince George's County Commission for Women.

The workshop on Protecting Our Sisters - International Women's Issues featured Sara Hasan Nagy of the Feminist Majority Foundation, Lou DeBaca of the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, Jeanne

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CFW 2004 State Legislative Priorities

The Commission for Women has selected several key initiatives of importance to women and families for its legislative priorities. The following bills highlight the CFW's advocacy efforts:

Pay Equity (SB 250) - The proposal would establish an Equal Pay Commission and require the Commission to study issues relating to pay equity. The bill would further require the Commission to make a report on or before September 30, 2005 regarding its findings

Emergency Contraception (HB 204/SB248) - This bill would establish the Emergency Contraception Dispensing Program in the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and provide a means of authorizing licensed pharmacists to dispense emergency contraception without a prescription in accordance with specified procedures.

"No Means No" (HB923) - The bill seeks to improve Maryland's criminal law to ensure that if a person says "no" to a sexual act and her lack of consent is ignored, it should be considered a crime in Maryland.

Family and Medical Leave:

Paid Leave (not to be introduced during the 2004 session) - This legislative initiative will create a self-funded short-term disability program that allows working families to receive a portion of their income while taking family or medical leave. The program would provide working men and women up to 12 weeks of partially paid leave if they need to take time off to recover from a serious illness, care for a seriously ill family member or care for a newborn or newly adopted child.

Unpaid Leave for School-related Activities (HB 25) - This bill requires an employer to provide up to 16 hours of unpaid leave for parents to attend school related conferences or activities. Employees may use vacation time or other annual leave.

March is Women's History Month

Tracy Stuger

Even as recently as the 1970s, women's history was virtually an unknown topic in the K-12 curriculum or in general public consciousness. To address this situation, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County, California Commission on the Status of Women initiated a "Women's History Week" celebration for 1978. The week of March 8 was chosen to make International Women's Day the focal point of the observance. The activities that were held met with enthusiastic response, and within a few years, dozens of schools participated in the Community Resource Women Project, an annual "Real Woman" essay contest drew hundreds of entries, and a marvelous annual parade and program was held in downtown Santa Rosa, CA.

In 1979, Molly MacGregor, then director of the Sonoma County Commission of the Status of Women, was invited to participate in a Women's History Institute at Sarah Lawrence College, attended by the national leadership of organizations for women and girls. When MacGregor told the other participants about their county-wide Women's History Week celebration, these leaders decided to initiate similar celebrations within their own organizations and school districts. They also agreed to secure an official Congressional Resolution declaring a "National Women's History Week." In 1981, Senators Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT) co-sponsored the first such Joint Congressional Resolution.

The popularity of women's history celebrations has sparked a new interest in uncovering women's forgotten heritage. Many states and cities have instituted a "Women's Hall of Fame," or have published biographical materials about prominent women in the history of their particular locale. In many areas, state historical societies, women's organizations and groups such as the Girls Scouts have worked together to develop joint National Women's History Month programs. The efforts of educators, workplace program planners, parents and community organizations in thousands of American communities have turned National Women's History Month into a major focal celebration, and a springboard for celebrating women's history all year.

(continued from page 4)

Smoot, Public Policy Counsel at the Tahirih Justice Center and Joy Zarembka, Director of the Campaign for Migrant Domestic Workers. The panel discussed the issues of trafficking and domestic servitude as well as the Clear Law Enforcement for Criminal Alien Removal (CLEAR) Act and the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act. The moderator for this panel was Yun Jung Yang, Chair of the Montgomery County Commission for Women's Immigrant Women in (IWin) Montgomery County Committee.

A fitting end to the briefing's theme of activism was a reception featuring many of the state's elected officials. Panelists also used this time to meet with audience members to discuss the issues presented during the event.

The Women's Legislative Briefing 2004 was cosponsored by 65 organizations including the Commissions for Women of Montgomery County, Baltimore County, Cecil County, Charles County, Washington County, Worcester County, and the State of Maryland. The event was organized with the help and expertise of volunteers representing the commissions and organizations of these jurisdictions. The use of the National 4-H Conference Center was made possible by NIH's Office of Community Liaison. Discovery Communications, Inc. and Travel the World, Inc. also provided financial support for the event.

Report Reveals Decline in Maryland's Women Gubernatorial Appointees and Top Staff Advisors

A recent report conducted by the Center for Women in Government and Civil Society shows that between 1999 and 2003, women's share of leadership posts in the state of Maryland decreased sharply. The report examines the composition of gubernatorial appointees at the helm of departments, agencies, offices, boards, commissions and authorities; and top staff advisors in governors' offices.

The report reveals that, in Maryland, women hold less than half the top policy posts to which they would be appointed if the proportion of women appointees were equal to the proportion of women in the population. The percentage of women in the Maryland population is 51.7%, and women comprise only 21% of policy leaders as defined by this report. When compared to the other fifty states, Maryland is ranked 47th in the year 2003. In 1999, the ranking for the state of Maryland was 14.

from the "2004 - Appointed Policy Makers in State Government Five Year Trend Analysis: Gender, Race and Ethnicity," Center for Women in Government and Civil Society.

Equal Pay Day - April 20, 2004

Equal Pay Day will be held this year on April 20, 2004. This national observance, sponsored each year by the National Committee on Pay Equity, symbolizes the day into the new year that an American woman must work to equal the wages paid to a man in the previous year. Although the Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibits unequal pay for equal or "substantially equal" work performed by men and women, women continue to earn substantially less than their male counterparts. In addition, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits wage discrimination on the basis of sex. Yet women's average salary still lags behind that of men.

This year, the Maryland General Assembly is considering legislation, S.B. 250, which would establish a commission to study pay equity issues in Maryland. By ending gender-based discriminatory pay practices, pay equity will contribute to fairer and more productive work environment.

Many groups throughout the nation will participate in Equal Pay Day activities in their hometowns. Some of the scheduled activities include press conferences, rallies, forums, lobbying efforts and "new year's day" celebrations. For more information on Equal Pay Day, and what you or your organization can do to help, visit www.pay-equity.org.

Calendar of Events

The following is only a partial listing of the many workshops and seminars offered at the Commission for Women. Visit our website at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw or call our Counseling and Career Center at 240-777-8300 or pick up the complete calendar at any Montgomery County library. Unless otherwise noted, all sessions listed will be held at 401 N. Washington Street, Suite 100, Rockville, Maryland.

PERFECTIONISM: Myths & Reality

Is your self-worth based on achievement? Do you selectively see your mistakes and not your accomplishments? Come to this supportive and informative seminar. Realistic and attainable steps to successfully manage your perfectionist tendencies will be presented. *Presented by Janet Akman, LCSW-C.* 1 session. Registration required.

FEE: \$10.00 **OUT OF COUNTY: \$15.00**

Tuesday, March 23, 2004 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

NETWORKING MADE SIMPLE

Is networking one of those words you hear all the time, but are not sure how to go about it? In this workshop, we will discuss where, when, and how to network. Best of all you will meet others who are eager to network with you. Whether you want to find a new job, expand your circle of friends, or grow your own business, this workshop is for you. *Led by Rachel L. Manchester, M.S.* 1 session. Registration required.

FEE: \$10.00 **OUT OF COUNTY: \$15.00**

Tuesday, March 30, 2004 7 – 8:45 p.m.

WOMEN IN TRANSITION

Change . . . we all experience it and sometimes it overwhelms us. It affects our lives, our relationships, our careers, and our health. Join us in a supportive environment as we explore how to face the challenges change can bring in a positive, productive, and healthy manner. *Presented by Margery Gottfried, M.S.* 6 sessions. Registration required.

FEE: \$60.00 **OUT OF COUNTY: \$90.00**

Tuesdays, April 6, 13, 20, 27 & May 4 & May 11, 2004 10 a.m. - noon

BUILDING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Leadership opportunities abound! Learn the six basic components of leadership that allow you to take on new, more powerful roles at work, at home, or in your community. *Presented by Sandra Van Fossen, M.A.* 1 session. Registration required.

FEE: \$10.00 **OUT OF COUNTY: \$15.00**

Wednesday, April 14, 2004 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

WOMEN, MONEY, & RETIREMENT

Take control of your financial future and plan for a secure retirement. Susan Morris from the Montgomery County Cooperative Extension Service will present an overview of financial planning for retirement including a discussion of mutual funds, IRA's and other options for retirement savings. Each participant will receive a worksheet for retirement planning. 1 session. Registration required.

FEE: \$10.00 **OUT OF COUNTY: \$15.00**

Tuesday, April 22, 2004 10 a.m. - noon

Montgomery County Commission for Women

401 N. Washington Street, Suite 100

Rockville, Maryland 20850-1703

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Community Events

Tuesday, March 16, 2004, A Celebration of Montgomery County Women's History. In Commemoration of the induction of two Montgomery County women (Emily Edmonson and Vivian Simpson) into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame 6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m., Doubletree Hotel, 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland, \$33. *(Further information is available on page 3)*

Wednesday, March 17, 2004, "An American Agenda: Members of the Club", Longworth House Office Building, Room 1539, Washington, DC, 12:00 - 4:30 PM. For more information call 703-631-0650, or visit www.dialogueondiversity.org

Saturday, March 27, 2004, 2004 Montgomery County Women's Fair, Montgomery Blair High School, 51 E. University Boulevard, Silver Spring, Maryland, 8:00 AM - 5:00PM. For more information, contact Angela Magliozzi at amagliozzi@niaid.nih.gov

March 18 - 21, 2004, Looking Back Moving Forward: The Unfinished Business of Brown v. Board of Education, A conference sponsored by Hood College, Frederick, Maryland. Online registration is available at www.hood.edu/brownvboard. For more information, contact Olivia White, conference coordinator at owhite@hood.edu or (301) 696-3573.

Wednesday, March 31, 2004 Getting Girls to Get I.T., An Educator's Symposium, 3:00 - 9:00 PM, Discovery Communications Incorporated World Headquarters, One Discovery Place, Silver Spring, MD. Sponsored by the Girls and Technology Initiative of the Montgomery County Commission for Women, The Maryland Commission for Women, and Discovery Communications, Inc. For more information, call 240-777-8330 or visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw

Sunday, April 25th, 2004 in Washington, DC, March for Women's Lives. For further information e-mail march@feminist.org or visit <http://march.feminist.org/>